

THE HOUSE OF TAKUMI

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POEM-SEQUENCE FROM THE JAPANESE

Hidden Builders

I built for myself an abode that was planned of materials only,
Carefully choosing each hollow bamboo;
But spirit-things also wove themselves into it, twining like tendrils through lattices,
Distilling their atmospheres finer than air, not fashioned for breathing;
Unseen and unguessed by the workmen, they too were the builders and weavers,
Endlessly weaving.

Hoarded Love

House I have loved with a love like that of a man for a woman,
Love like an ether now clasps you and folds you!
House I have blessed with a blessing like that of father for daughter,
Back from your walls, as I gazed open-eyed at the midnight,
Blessings returned like the voices persistent of temple bells ringing,
Clearer than silver!

Love Reflected

The Buddha blessed the bread before he brake the loaf
And gave to his disciples;
For soulless things are sensitive to love;
They gather, hoard, and then in kind return,
They thrill with gathered and reflected love,
Vibrating bell-like.

Heredity

I dreamed a dream about a living house,
Pulsing and throbbing.
Perplexed I climbed its ancient way of stairs
To find within its teeming haunted brain
All moving shapes that there had lived or died,
Endlessly living.

Coming Generations

Before the dawn-birds sang, uncertain little feet
Frequently pattered
On floors that claimed no echo from the listening walls.
The sleepers on their white beds stirred and thrilled,
But did not hear the childish phantom feet
Beating their music.

Desire for Children

The morning birds had ceased their first light-greeting song
And flown for food and water
Before I knew I dreamed of children never born.
O little feet so musical upon the stairs!
O little voices speaking in the inner ear
Foolishly dreaming!

Waters of Bitterness

I think my heart will smother me,
Beating against my side;
For within the room above,
Surrounded by those who can not help,
Languishes one I love,
Patiently suffering.

Passing Generations

The wind sings in the chimney,
Breathing where it will.
Doors stand open and close again silently ;
A great peace broods under the many roofs;
The walls, listening vainly for footsteps,
Seem to be waiting.

The Flow of Time

Long have I waited for the spring,
Praying for time to pass.
Now the cherry trees are white like snow
And violets are blue in the fields:
But well I know that they who made it spring
Are not returning.

The House of Quietness

The wind sings in the chimney,
Rising and dying.
The stillness of the empty house is a persistent voice.
I hear its sibilant whisper like the waters of a sea.
For hours I lie and listen to the waves of silence,
Ceaselessly breaking.

Opened Windows

Have mind and heart like children been deceived,
Grasping at shadows?
For still they whisper that they infinitely love
And feel that they are infinitely loved ;

And this they always knew yet never comprehended
Until the voice of the essential silence
Whispered its secret.

The Time of Blossom

And the unplanted vines have grown and spread,
Filling the lattices;
The living walls are gay with crowded bloom,
The little footsteps patter down the walks
And little voices fill the fragrant halls,
Laughing and loving.